

Major Moves Help Desk

Office of Governor Mitch Daniels

Major Moves is Major Victory for NW Indiana

Times of Northwest Indiana
March 16, 2006

It is symbolic of the rapid pace of change in Indiana that Gov. Mitch Daniels signed House Bill 1008 the day after it squeaked through the Indiana General Assembly.

The Major Moves legislation was passed by the House of Representatives, 51-48, late Monday and 31-19 in the Senate. Sen. Earline Rogers, D-Gary, was one of two Democrats who voted for it.

HB 1008 has been described as the jobs bill of a generation. It will generate thousands of jobs, which is why Rogers voted for it.

It promises not just to build highways but also the state's economy. In a global economy, being the "Crossroads of America" isn't quite good enough. Indiana, and Northwest Indiana in particular, must become the crossroads of the world.

So the new law authorizes the lease of the Indiana Toll Road to generate revenue to pay for a variety of transportation projects, a notable one being the extension of I-69 between Indianapolis and Evansville. Build that stretch of I-69 as a toll road, and then share that toll money with the rest of the state, just as northern Indiana's toll road is kick-starting development elsewhere.

That money can and should put the Iliana Expressway in the fast lane.

It is not on Daniels' list of priority projects, but it is an important way to relieve traffic on the Borman Expressway and in the southern part of the region. A public-private partnership might be the answer to accelerating the project.

A major victory for Northwest Indiana in the compromise hammered out on HB 1008 is the establishment of a long-term funding source for the Regional Development Authority. It stands to receive \$10 million a year for eight years, plus \$20 million right away and another \$20 million earmarked for improvements at Gary/Chicago International Airport.

With the restoration of a long-term funding source for the RDA, the bill was worth passing. We're glad it passed, even if just barely.

The region's economic future is closely tied to its access to transportation. It already has expressways, commuter rail service, a port, an airport with the potential to become an important air freight hub, and a series of bus services that should be merged.

Enhance that transportation, and the economic development should come. As commuter rail service is extended to Lowell and Valparaiso, development of housing, retail stores and office parks are bound to follow, just as they have along other commuter rail corridors.

Make it easier to transfer freight from one mode of transportation to another -- between planes, trains, trucks and ships -- and Northwest Indiana will be able to build its transportation, distribution and logistics industry, which offers jobs paying good wages.

The \$3.85 billion, 75-year Toll Road lease, the catalyst for this transportation spending spree, is expected to be signed by April 14 and the deal closed on or before June 30. Northwest Indiana has much to gain from this new landmark legislation.



Gov. Daniels and Lt. Governor Becky Skillman discuss Major Moves and the Legislative session.
Photo by: The Louisville Courier-Journal

Important Major Moves Dates

March 22, 2006 – Public hearing on lease agreement in Elkhart

March 23, 2006 – Public hearing on toll rate increase in South Bend

March 24, 2005 – Public hearing on toll rate increase in Indianapolis

April 14, 2006 – State and Statewide Mobility Partners sign lease agreement

June 30, 2006 – Closing of the deal. State receives \$3.85 billion payment

July 1, 2006 – SMP assumes Toll Road operation. Funds distributed to RDA/Gary Airport

September 15, 2006 – Funds for Toll Road Counties distributed

October 15, 2006 – MVH Road Funds distributed to all 92 counties

Quick Quotes about Major Moves

Let's count the winners now that the lease of the Indiana Toll Road has been approved and signed into law: taxpayers, workers, road builders and other homegrown businesses, 6.1 million Hoosiers, House and Senate Republicans, state Sens. Glenn Howard and Earline Rogers (the only Democrats to vote for the legislation), and, yes, Gov. Mitch Daniels. *Indianapolis Star Editorial*

From a historical perspective, the Indiana Legislature's approval of Gov. Mitch Daniels' highway construction initiative will be remembered as the decision that allowed for the timely construction of Interstate 69. *Evansville Courier & Press Editorial*

"They [INDOT] know they have a new and terrible problem: Me. I'm going to be all over them to show that they can do things in a new, faster, more effective way." Governor Mitch Daniels—*Louisville Courier-Journal*

As for the losers? The biggest surely are those folks who feared that the state is "selling" the Toll Road to foreigners. Those no doubt are the same people who worry about all the downsides of Toyota announcing this week that it will create 1,000 jobs in Lafayette. *Indianapolis Star Editorial*

If we have any disappointment, it is in the Democratic members of the legislative delegation from Southwestern Indiana who voted in unison against the bill, and therefore against the opportunity to see I-69 built any time soon. Voters should not forget that, come November. The credit for looking out for the interests of Southwestern Indiana on this project goes to Daniels and to the Republican members of the delegation who supported the bill. *Evansville Courier & Press Editorial*

The state suddenly has \$3.8 billion to invest in infrastructure. An underperforming asset has been leveraged to maximum potential. The roadwork not only will strengthen the state's transportation system but also create jobs. Indiana is ready to do business. *Indianapolis Star Editorial*